

my commanding officer, who informed me that whenever headquarters called we were always ready. The military, he explained correctly, prized a "can do outfit," and the services promoted those who performed regardless of circumstances.

My next encounter was in 1980, when I was preparing a monograph on the subject for the American Enterprise Institute. When word of my project reached the Pentagon I was drowned in data (some of which was highly classified) and anecdotes from normally tight-lipped bureaucrats. When I went to the Pentagon to conduct some interviews, I was treated like a foreign dignitary.

One of my conclusions was that readiness is a slippery and poorly understood concept. To most people it is a synonym for military capability or preparedness. To the military, however, readiness is only one of four components of preparedness, and not necessarily the most important one. To obtain a true picture, one had to look at the other three pillars—force structure (the number of ships, planes, tanks), modernization (the age of the forces) and sustainability (staying power). Thus, a very ready force could be considered militarily impotent if it was too small, too old and lacked staying power. By the same token, a force that was bigger, more sophisticated and better armed than its adversaries could be deemed unready if it was considered improperly trained and outfitted.

I also concluded that readiness is a hot-button political issue, subject to unlimited manipulation. Even the informed public can't judge such matters as the appropriate force structure, the proper time to replace a plane or tank and the level of effort necessary to win a war. But everybody wants and expects a ready force.

Military leaders were quick to grasp the political potential of readiness scares. In the late 70's, word went out that reports of readiness problems would be welcomed by headquarters. The only exception was the Marine Corps. I was told by a general that the Marines had been C-2 (ready) for 200 years!

I also came to understand that measuring readiness is hardly an exact science. Each service defined readiness differently, and I found similar units with similar problems reporting different levels of readiness. The Air Force claimed that a fighter pilot needed to fly 20 hours a month to stay battle fit. The Navy and Marine Corps said their pilots needed a minimum of 24 hours a month; Air National Guard units needed only 10 hours per month. No one could ever explain why readiness demanded that Army tanker trucks drive 800 miles a year, why ships needed to steam 55 days per quarter or why helicopter pilots needed only 14 hours a month flying time.

Finally, I discovered that a unit's readiness was determined by the lowest grade it received in any of the four categories (personnel, equipment and supplies on hand, equipment readiness and training). Thus, a fully manned unit with modern equipment in perfect working order would be classified as not ready if it trained for only a brief period of time.

Nonetheless, my report for the American Enterprise Institute concluded that the armed forces were indeed experiencing severe readiness problems, for three reasons. Given the threat posed by our principal adversary, the Soviet Union, military expenditures in the 1970's were too low. Moreover, the civilian and military leaders of the Department of Defense decided to spend the few extra dollars they received on stealth war planes, cruise missiles and other new technologies at the expense of flying hours and spare parts. Finally, the Carter Administration allowed military pay and benefits to fall 25 percent behind comparable rates in the private sector. Consequently, the quality of recruits fell

below acceptable standards and retention rates dropped precipitously.

My conclusions were attacked by the Secretary of Defense but embraced by the military and candidate Reagan. My reward, following the Reagan triumph, was to be appointed "readiness czar" in the Pentagon.

Once in office, I was introduced to another side of the politics of readiness. The military chiefs, having skillfully used the issue to help secure a large spending increase, were much less interested infixing readiness than in modernizing and enlarging their forces. The same Army chief who had coined the term "hollow military" told the Secretary of Defense that the best way to improve a soldier's readiness was to buy him a new rifle.

Spending for readiness did increase by about 20 percent, or nearly \$10,000 per person (in total, less than one-fifth the increase in procurement). Nonetheless, according to the Joint Chiefs, by 1984 the readiness of all major units, except Navy ships, had gone down and I was being pilloried by the Democrats.

How did this happen? Without telling their civilian "superiors," the service chiefs had raised the standards for readiness right along with the Reagan buildup. After these standards were made more realistic, readiness began to grow significantly during the last half of the 1980's, reaching all-time highs. The performance of the American forces in the gulf in 1990 and 1991 showed just how capable and ready they were.

With the ascension of Bill Clinton to the Presidency, readiness once again emerged as the hot-button issue. Senator John McCain, the Arizona Republican, issued a report called "Going Hollow," in which he drew heavily on the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Last December, a weakened President Clinton pledged an additional \$25 billion for readiness. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the current readiness gap, like others since the 1970's, was designed and manufactured by the Pentagon to serve its political agenda—to maintain the cold war status quo.

Despite several reviews of force structure in recent years, the services remain configured to contain a non-existent Soviet empire. The Navy still keeps three active carrier battle groups, with thousands of battle-ready marines, while the Army and Air Force have nearly 200,000 troops stationed in Europe and Asia. Thus, when a crisis erupts in a Haiti or a Rwanda, these forces must take on these assignments as "extra tasks," for which they often lack training and equipment. The question here is not readiness but why we continue to train and deploy forces for cold war tasks.

Additionally, the services have inflated the threat against which readiness is measured. According to President Clinton, the armed forces should be prepared to fight two major regional wars simultaneously: one against Iraq and one against North Korea. According to the Pentagon and many Republicans, the services have neither the money nor the forces to accomplish this. Since defense spending is at about 85 percent of its average cold war level, this leads to the absurd conclusion that Iraq and North Korea (which together spend less than \$20 billion a year on the military) equal 85 percent of the might of the Soviet empire.

Finally, the joint chiefs are simply manipulating the system. Two of the three Army divisions that they identified as unready were in the process of being demobilized. Other units were not able to do routine training because they were involved in a real war, that is, the October deployment to the Persian Gulf to deal with Saddam's thrust toward Kuwait. The Marines, who have finally caught on, now say that their readiness is lower than in 1980!

The U.S. has the finest and best financed military in the world. It is also the most ready, prepared to go thousands of miles on short notice. But it is inadequately controlled by its civilian superiors. Because of Bill Clinton's perceived political vulnerability on defense issues, the civilian leaders do not wish to risk a confrontation with the Republicans or the military chiefs. As a result, the "nonpolitical" admirals and generals running the military are taking all of us to the cleaners, using the readiness gap to snatch up precious dollars to defend against a threat that no longer exists.

DELAURO HONORS LOCAL HERO

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 1995

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in mourning the passing of a true hero. Mr. John Willsher of Woodbridge, CT, died of a heart attack last month after helping to rescue two young boys, whom he had never met, from the freezing waters of Lily Pond in New Haven.

Having stopped to buy gas, he heard the boys screaming from across the street and ran to help. As part of a brave and selfless rescue effort, he helped remove the boys from the frigid waters of the pond. After making the rescue, John Willsher suffered a fatal heart attack.

Mr. Willsher died the same way he lived for 57 years—helping others. He was known among relatives and neighbors as helpful and generous. His countless acts of selflessness cannot be listed, but will long be remembered by those who knew him.

Mr. Willsher is remembered by his friends and family for his good sense of humor, his interest in politics, and his love of cooking. He and his wife, Elizabeth (Buddy), to whom he had been married for 30 years, and his three children, Michael, Peter, and Jennifer, were very close.

Mr. Willsher moved to the United States from Colchester, England in 1963. He worked as a plumber for 18 years at the AlliedSignal Corp. in Stratford and was 2 years away from retirement.

John Willsher reminds us of the best in people. His generosity and selflessness renew our faith in ourselves.

I am confident that my colleagues in the House join me as I send my deepest condolences to the Willsher family and my gratitude for the selflessness and bravery demonstrated by John throughout his life.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ESTEBAN EDWARD TORRES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 1995

Mr. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent on official business on Wednesday, March 22, 1995, for rollcall vote No. 255. Had I been present on the House floor I would have cast my vote as follows: "nay" on agreeing to the resolution, House Resolution 119,